

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An assembly drum for tire manufacture, comprising:

a central shaft;

a body mounted on said shaft and having a generally cylindrical outer surface for receiving products to be assembled to make up a tire;

a pair of axially spaced shoulders on said body, said shoulders defining at least in part said generally cylindrical outer surface and being radially and axially movable between a retracted position of the drum, in which said generally cylindrical outer surface has a minimum diameter and a minimum axial length, and a working position of the drum, in which the diameter and axial length of said generally cylindrical outer surface are greater than in the retracted position; and

means carried at least in part by said shoulders for holding said products in contact with said shoulders.

2. An assembly drum according to Claim 1, in which said holding means comprises at least one vacuum valve for each shoulder.

3. An assembly drum according to Claim 1, in which said shoulders are movable in a synchronized fashion so as to move further away from or closer to each other.

4. An assembly drum according to Claim 1, in which said axial and radial movements of each shoulder are simultaneous.

5. An assembly drum according to Claim 1, in which:

each shoulder comprises a plurality of circumferentially spaced lateral elements distributed regularly about said central axis;

and wherein said drum further comprises:

a barrel centered on said central axis;

a support on said barrel for each shoulder; and

a rocker arm associated with each of said circumferentially spaced lateral elements, each rocker arm being articulated at one end to a circumferentially spaced lateral element and at the other end to said support.

6. An assembly drum according to Claim 5, in which each support comprises:

a slide which is axially movable relative to said barrel; and

an actuating cam on said slide for cooperative engagement with each rocker arm.

7. An assembly drum according to Claim 5, in which said at least one vacuum valve for each shoulder is disposed inside a lateral element and opens out through an external surface of said lateral element.

8. An assembly drum according to Claim 7, in which each shoulder includes a plurality of said vacuum valves distributed regularly over the circumference of the drum, each said vacuum valve being disposed in one of the lateral elements included in said shoulder.

9. An assembly drum according to Claim 4, in which the axially central part of said generally cylindrical surface comprises a plurality of circumferentially spaced tiles which are partially superimposed on each other in the retracted position of the drum and which move radially along with said shoulders.